
MEMORANDUM

TO: MEMBERS, STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

FROM: ADE ACCOUNTABILITY SECTION

SUBJECT: PRESENTATION, DISCUSSION, AND CONSIDERATION REGARDING CRITERIA TO IDENTIFY SCHOOLS WITH “BELOW AVERAGE” LEVELS OF PERFORMANCE DURING THE 2014-2015 AND 2015-2016 SCHOOL YEARS

DATE: MAY 7, 2015

ESEA Reward, Focus, and Priority Criteria as State Accountability

As contemplated in Laws 2015, Chapter 76, (also referred to as SB1289), the Department (ADE) must use criteria approved by the State Board of Education (SBE) to identify schools which demonstrate a “below average level of performance” annually. While SB1289 prohibits the issuance of a letter grade for the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 school years – SB1289 does not prohibit accountability or monitoring school performance. In fact, the Department must publicly report achievement data for all schools – including performance on AzMERIT. The requirement to report student outcomes at the school level meets both state and federal mandates. The Department will publicly report data upon earliest availability. The availability of certain data elements such as graduation rates, full academic year enrollment, etc. will not be impacted by the inaugural year of the AzMERIT assessment, and schools can expect delays related to standard setting Arizona’s new English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics assessments. The prohibition of A-F letter grades does not impede the ability to report other school performance measures used for monitoring and informational purposes, and ADE will continuously update an estimated data availability schedule for stakeholders.

A.R.S. 15-241 previously described schools with “D” letter grades (or the equivalent under parallel models) as having a “below average level of performance.” Schools which received less than 100 A-F points in the A-F Letter Grade Accountability System or tested less than 75% of students received the “D” letter grade. Without the ability to issue a corresponding 2015 letter grade, the identification of “below average” schools should also forego calculating standard “A-F points” which equate to labels as described in A.R.S. 15-241. Using the original A-F point scale, continued use of A-F points could undermine the intent to evaluate school performance using more nuanced methodology during the transition.



ESEA flexibility offers more local control so schools can use Title I funds to support student achievement without the requirement for 100% proficiency. To continue ESEA flexibility, ADE's submission to the U.S. Department of Education describes the use of disaggregated performance measures in order to identify schools which qualify for Reward, Focus, and Priority status statewide. These federal labels previously applied to Title I schools only; however, all schools could be eligible for a label using new criteria developed by Arizona in lieu of A-F letter grade labels and/or AYP determinations. Under ESEA flexibility, Priority schools are defined as the lowest 5% of schools which need and receive support and interventions accordingly. In addition to review by national organizations and voluntary critique from Arizona educators and parents, ADE accountability staff vetted and informed new criteria by meeting directly with stakeholders through the following venues:

12/22/14	Accountability Advisory Group (AAG) Meeting
02/06/15	Greater Phoenix Educational Management Council (GPEMC)
02/17/15	Accountability Advisory Group (AAG) Meeting
02/27/15	Accountability Advisory Group (AAG) Meeting
03/05/15	High Flyers group (in coordination with ADE Exceptional Student Services Unit)
03/05/15	Title I Spring Coordinator's Meeting
03/06/15	Title I Committee of Practitioners Meeting
03/16/15	Accountability Advisory Group (AAG) Meeting

Post A-F letter grade criteria preserve underlying components from the former system without assigning A-F points which may lead to unofficial or unintentional letter grade assignments. Using performance in prior years offers a more reliable evaluation despite a new assessment likely to impact schools statewide. While ESEA guidance requires the state to target support to at least 5% of its lowest performing schools, Priority identification is no longer based on the 5% of Title I schools with the lowest number of A-F points. Also, schools with the lowest AzMERIT proficiency rates do not automatically qualify for mandated support and improvement. Priority identification does not promote perverse incentives or require harmful competition among schools by requiring a specific number of schools with low performance on a single measure. Priority criteria recognize that 2014-2015 student achievement data will be based on a brand new assessment which may impact all schools statewide in the first year. Although a lowest quartile exists for every measure rank-ordered, schools which repeatedly fall in this category for multiple years and on multiple measures would receive targeted support as Priority schools.

A school which meets the following criteria may receive a Priority label based on the demonstration of low performance over multiple years and measures:

- School received less than 100 A-F points in the 2013-2014 school year **AND**
- Current year percentage of students passing ELA & Mathematics is in the lowest quartile of the state (based on AzMERIT) **AND** any one of the following:



- *The percentage of students passing ELA & Mathematics is in the lowest quartile of the state for the last two years as well (based on up to two prior year AIMS administrations) **OR***
- *Current year growth for school's ALL students in lowest quartile of the state **OR***
- *The school's College and Career Readiness Index score (Aggregated 4, 5, 6, & 7 year graduation rates & persistence rate) has declined since the 2013-2014 school year (baseline year of CCRI score)*

Non-alternative high schools may receive a Priority label if their 4-year graduation rate is less than 60% for the last three school years and the school's current year dropout rate is amongst the highest in the state. Although the dropout rate criterion is relative to dropout rates statewide, schools which met the low graduation rate criterion for Priority status averaged a dropout rate of 17% based on impact analyses. While it is possible that no school in Arizona would meet all the criteria necessary for a Priority label, impact analyses suggest a similar proportion of schools would qualify as "below average" compared to prior years. In fact, most schools will not receive an overall Reward, Focus, or Priority label, but ADE will continue to report data in order to monitor progress of all schools regardless of Title I eligibility.

ADE's Chief Accountability Officer, Associate Superintendent of Accountability, Assessments & Adult Education, and Deputy Associate Superintendent for Support & Innovation held six public meetings throughout Arizona to discuss implications of recent legislation on school accountability especially as it pertains to SB1289 and the following recommendation. In the absence of A-F letter grades and in order to use a state-developed system applicable to all Arizona schools, the Department recommends replacing the A-F points used to identify "D" schools with the criteria developed to identify the lowest performing schools under ESEA flexibility.

Recommended Action:

The State Board adopt "Priority" label criteria, as developed and described by the Department, in order to identify schools which "demonstrate a below average level of performance" in the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 school years.

Development of Arizona's Revised Accountability System

As prescribed in SB1289, ADE is working with SBE staff to facilitate focus groups designed to inform a new accountability system. Multiple school types, regions, interests, and stakeholders impacted by Arizona's method of measuring school performance will inform policy recommendations aligned to the Board's principles regarding school and district accountability. The Department will engage other state education agencies, its technical advisory group, as well as the multiple state and national consortia during the 2015-2016 school year in order to develop an accountability system aligned to Arizona's high standards for students as well as its schools.

